

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 101509Z MAY 76

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7949

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 0626

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR JO, IS,

SUBJ: TALKS WITH MAYORS OF BETHLEHEM, BEIT SAHOUR AND BEIT JALA

1. SUMMARY. IN MAY 10 TALKS WITH RE-ELECTED MAYOR OF BETHLEHEM AND NEWLY-ELECTED MAYORS OF BEIT SAHOUR AND BEIT JALA, THEY STRESSED NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT FINANCING, ACCEPTED PLO AS DESIGNATED VOICE OF PALESTINAINS, AND STATED WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT ISRAELIS WITHIN 1967 BORDERS. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER INITIAL SETTLING IN, ACCOMPANIED BY POLOFF/HULL I BEGAN CALLS ON NEWLY-INSTALLED WEST BANK MAYORS MAY 10 IN BETHLEHEM, BEIT SAHOUR AND BEIT JALA. MAYOR FREIJ OF BETHLEHEM SAID ACCEPTANCE BY UN OF PLO MEANT THAT IS WAS INTERNATIONAL SPOKESMAN FOR PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. WHEN QUERIED ABOUT PALESTINE NATIONAL COVENANT, HE SAID HE COULD NOT GO THAT FAR SINCE ISRAELIS, AS WELL AS PALESTINIANS, HAD RIGHT TO THEIR OWN STATE. LEBANON, HE SAID, SHOWED GOALD OF DEMOCRATIC SECULAR STATE TO BE IMPRACTICAL IN
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MIDDLE EAST WHEN LARGE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES WERE

SUPPOSED TO CO-EXIST PEACEFULLY.

3. FREIJ BEMOANED EXODUS OF WEST BANKERS TO JORDAN AND GULF STATES AND SAID DEVELOPMENT FINANCING MUST BE FOUND. HUSSEIN, HE ALLEGED, NO LONGER HELPED BETHLEHEM. FREIJ PROPOSED OIL RICH ARAB STATES ESTABLISH FUND OF JD 1 HUNDRED MILLION FOR WEST BANK DEVELOPMENT.

4. NEWLY-ELECTED MAYOR ATRASH OF BEIT SAHOUR TOOK LINE SIMILAR TO FREIJ. HE IS FORMER EMPLOYEE OF ARAMCO AND INDICATED THAT HE WOULD SEEK ASSISTANCE DIRECTLY FROM GULF STATES FOR SPECIFIC LOCAL PROJECTS. WHEN INVESTED BY MILITARY GOVERNOR, HE HAD REQUESTED RELEASE OF ADMINISTRATIVELY DETAINED COUNCIL MEMBER RISHMAWI. GOVERNOR HAD SAID CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT WOULD BE DELIVERED IN PRISON BUT MADE NO COMMITMENT CONCERNING RELEASE.

5. NEWLY-ELECTED MAYOR OF BEIT JALA DAOUD HAD PREVIOUSLY SERVED ON CITY COUNCIL AND HAD SPENT FOUR YEARS PUTTING TOGETHER SLATE WHICH WON UNANIMOUSLY. HE TOO STRESSED NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND INDICATED THAT HE WOULD APPEAL TO NATIVES OF BEIT JALA NOW RESIDING IN LATIN AMERICA. MAYOR POINTED TO NEW MUNICIPAL MARKET BEING BUILT WITH JD 60,000 LOAN FROM ARAB BANK IN AMMAN, AND NOTED THAT REPAYMENT OF PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST WOULD EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATE ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FROM AMMAN FOR NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. DAOUD SAID HE HAD INITIATED CONTACTS WITH OTHER WEST BANK MAYORS TO DISCUSS COMMON PROBLEMS.

5. COMMENT. ALL THREE MUNICIPALITIES SIMILAR IN THAT THEY HAVE CHRISTIAN MAJORITIES AND ARE TRADITIONALLY CONSERVATIVE. FREIJ SURPRISED OBSERVERS BY BEING ONLY CONSERVATIVE INCUMBENT TO BE RE-ELECTED. NEW MAYOR OF BEIT SAHOUR FROM WELL-TO-DO CLAN AND HIS SLATE APPEARS LARGELY TO BE SUBSTITUTION OF YOUNGER, BETTER EDUCATED CITY COUNCIL FOR OLDER GENERATION. IN BEIT JALA, REVOLUTION WAS FROM WITHIN OLD CITY COUNCIL AND WHILE NEW MAYOR WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE MORE ACTIVE THAN HIS
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PREDECESSOR, ARAJ, O RADICAL DEPARTURE SHOULD BE EXPECTED.
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